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ABSTRACT

Federal funding of the National Head Start/Public School Transition Demonstration Project (NTP) is one of the ways in which the federal government has worked to put the National Education Goals into practice. South Dakota is one of the 31 sites that receive comprehensive NTP services. Family service coordinators (FSCs) provide services at the South Dakota Head Start/Public School Transition Demonstration Project (SDTP). This paper presents findings of an ethnography that identified barriers to and characteristics of successful implementation of NTP services. Data were gathered from observation; analysis of school and community documents; analysis of FSC journals; and a total of 300 interviews conducted with FSCs, principals, teachers, and parents. Barriers to implementation included resistance by some teachers or schools to change, communication problems, transportation, and dissemination of information to families. However, the program improved school-home communication, increased parental involvement in their children's education, and increased the use of developmentally appropriate practices. (Contains 51 references.) (LMI)

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Changing Educational Practices: An Ethnographic Study of How Schools Have Changed

A Paper Presented to
the American Educational Research Association
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Introduction

The quantity of research articles and books published on school reform attests to the importance of reform to the American public. The public pressure for the transformation of schools has increased alongside the publics' dissatisfaction with low levels of student performances. One result of the public outcry has been the establishment of The National Education Goals (Data Volume for the National Goals Report vol.2, 1994). The National Education Goals were created in 1990 to set standards on which to judge student achievement and to reverse the trend of low student achievement. The six National Education Goals set high expectations for education performance from the preschool years all the way through adulthood. In 1994 eight Goals were codified with the "Goals 2000: Educate America Act (Data Volume for the National Goals Report vol.2, 1994). Two additional goals were added to the original six to reflect the importance of parents and teachers in improving the education process (Data Volume for the National Goals Report vol.2, 1994). Two of the eight goals addressed by The National Education Goals involve the education of adults. Goal Six involves adult literacy and Goal Eight involves parent involvement in education. Federal funding of the National Head Start/Public School Transition Demonstration Project (NTP) has been one way the government has responded to

addressing the National Goals. The NTP is a comprehensive school-based intervention program designed to improve the outcome for students at-risk.

Project Description

The Head Start experience has recently been expanded into elementary schools through implementation of the National Head Start/Public School Transition Demonstration Project (NTP). The NTP was funded in 1991 and implemented in 1992 to provide services to children in kindergarten at thirty-one different sites in the United States.

One-half of the children and families in each of the thirty-one sites receive NTP services. The other half serve as comparison children and families. A second cohort of kindergarten children was added in the fall of 1993. The NTP is testing the hypothesis that providing continuous comprehensive services to Head Start children will maintain and enhance the early benefits attained by the children and their families (Kennedy, 1993). The NTP will continue to provide services to the children through their third grade year.

South Dakota was chosen as one of the thirty-one NTP sites. Comprehensive services are provided at the South Dakota Head Start/Public School Transition Demonstration Project (SDTP) site by family service coordinators (FSCs). All children attending SDTP demonstration schools and the children's families receive services in four component areas, social services, health, education, and parent involvement. The FSCs are very much

central to SDTP implementation in their service as liaisons between state agencies, community agencies, schools, and parents. The FCSs make routine home visits and work directly with parents in an effort to improve home-school communication, provide parents with educational resources, and help parents gain access to needed social services. An additional adult education component addresses adult literacy needs and parent training. Building trust on the part of the parents is an important element in developing partnerships between families and schools.

Another facet of the SDTP's educational component is educational transformation through the incorporation of Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAPs) into the classrooms. Developmentally Appropriate Practices are classroom instruction methods which recognize the, "...need for teachers to teach the whole child-physical, social, emotional, and cognitive dimensions-within an integrated curriculum in which children are engaged in active, rather than passive, activities (McIntyre, 1995, p. 145)." Other components of DAPs include: involving children in social interaction around meaningful relevant topics of interest to the children, classroom grouping (often achieved by the children themselves) across ability levels, and testing through comparisons of students' work with their previous work (McIntyre, 1995; Wakefield, 1993). A recent position statement from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (National Association for the Education of Young Children [NAEYC], 1988) recommends DAPs for children ages 5-8.

Utilization of DAPs by SDTP demonstration schools has been encouraged through the efforts of FSCs and SDTP sponsored teacher training. The teachers and principals from demonstration schools are invited by the SDTP each summer to attend a week long High Scope training workshop. The workshop attendance is voluntary and workshop fees are paid by the SDTP. Graduate credit for the workshop can be received by teachers who comply with the graduate credit guidelines and write a paper. In addition, all the teachers at demonstration schools received a $250 stipend that was used for purchases of classroom supplies during the 1994-1995 school year. The stipend is not a yearly feature, but the Project director hopes to be able to be able award one again before phase-out of the SDTP in 1997.

Literature Review

The literature cites a number of factors in successful school reform. Enlisting the support of teachers and the community are examples of the factors cited. Identifying the characteristics of at-risk students can also be a useful dimension in which to study school reform.

At Risk Children

American education is the focus of considerable national debate as global economic competition rises and the numbers of at-risk students increase. At-risk learners have been identified in the literature as having a high probability of academic failure and eventually dropping out of school (Ross, Smith, Casey, & Slavin, 1995). America fears that the educational

system is not producing members capable of becoming part of a competitive workforce. Goal two of The National Goals addresses the intent to increase the number of high school graduates (Data Volume for the National Goals Reports vol.2, 1994). At the present, 12 per cent of all adolescents will not complete high school (Data Volume for the National Goals Reports vol.2, 1994).

The most prominent characteristics of students at-risk has been identified in the literature as poverty (Bianchi, 1984; Campbell & Ramey, 1995; Chafel, 1990; Gleason, 1993; Horacek, Ramey, Campbell, Hoffmann, & Fletcher, 1987; Ross et al., 1995; Rush, 1992; Vacha & McLaughlin, 1992; Vickers, 1994; Zigler & Muenchow, 1992). The numbers of students fitting the at-risk profile are increasing. According to Chafel, society needs to intervene early in the lives of children at-risk (1990). Child poverty rates have been rising steadily from 15.7% in 1978 to 19.2% in 1988 (Chafel, 1990). According to Gleason (1993) and Zigler and Muenchow (1992), the comprehensive program of the National Head Start/Transition Project may be an efficient use of government funding for improving the chances for at-risk children. Gleason said, "The concepts are simple. Children can't learn if they're hungry or sick (1993, p. 31)."

Parent Involvement

An important intervention strategy in the lives of at-risk children is parent involvement (Eberhard, 1989; Gleason, 1993; Grolnick & Ryan, 1989; King, 1994; Levin, 1987; Purkey & Smith, 1985; Rush, 1992; Vacha & McLaughlin, 1992; Vickers, 1994; Zigler

& Muenchow, 1992). Parents' involvement in their children's education has been identified in educational and effective school research as an important predictor of the educational success of students (Grolnick & Ryan, 1989; Purkey & Smith, 1985; Vacha & McLaughlin, 1992). Brosz identified different forms that parent participation can take in the school as "parent as audience," "parent as communicator," "parent as advocate or advisor," and "parent as volunteer and/or teacher" (1988). Waugh, Bireley, Webb, and Graham identified the characteristics of parents who successfully reared gifted children and found that the parents were active participants in their children's education (1993). Grolnick and Ryan reported that children whose mothers were more involved in education were both better adjusted according to teachers and had higher achievement levels (1989).

Brosz identified attitudes of teachers and administrators as barriers to effective parent participation (1988). Brosz suggested that administrators and teachers may be afraid that parent involvement may interfere with the rights and duties of school personnel or the presence of parents may be disruptive to students (1988).

Educational Reform

The literature strongly suggests that schools should change policies and practices to address the needs of at-risk students (Gleason, 1993; Vacha & McLaughlin, 1992; Zigler & Muenchow, 1992). Gleason suggested that schools add the parent involvement and comprehensive service components of Head Start (1993).

Stallings (1995) encouraged schools to address the plight of at-risk students by providing comprehensive school-linked services for children. Vacha and McLaughlin recommended a number of specific changes in school policies: (1) schools should compensate low-income families by providing home resources such as access to reference books and tutoring programs; (2) schools should reduce the barriers to parent involvement such as parents' discomfort in the school setting and lack of information about the schools; (3) schools should understand that low-income parents are not going to be as involved with their children's education, and the schools should compensate by increasing the monitoring of the students through peer tutoring programs or computers (1992).

School-Community Relationship

The literature on school reform emphasized the importance of enlisting community and parent support for the reforms and understanding teacher and school characteristics (Mirel, 1994; Tyack & Tobin, 1994; Wells, Hirshberg, Lipton & Oakes, 1995). Wells et al. (1995) stated that the roles of school personnel were shaped by community norms; roles varied considerably in authority and prestige levels in different settings. Tyack and Tobin's (1994) conclusions regarding school reform were similar to the conclusions of Wells et al. (1995). Tyack and Tobin found the common element of "failure to enlist the support and ideas of the community" in their research on failed school reforms (1995, p. 477). Mirel warned against attempts to reform schools "from

above" and offered the following insights: (1) enlist community support before embarking on the reform, (2) teachers must be committed to the reform in order for the reform to succeed, and (3) in educational reform "less is more" (1994).

According to research, the boundaries between schools and rural communities are artificial (Carlson & Dunne, 1981; Cousins, 1984; Hobbs, 1981; Versteeg, 1993; Wells et al., 1995). Parents are community members and are likely to be school staff in rural communities. The schools are typically one of the largest sources of employment for rural communities (Butler Flora et al., 1992). Versteeg stated that rural schools and rural communities are tightly linked and interdependent (1993). Versteeg added, "A strong, vital rural community is dependent on the existence of a high-quality educational program, and a high-quality educational program is dependent on a vital community..." (1993). Educational researchers should consider the inter-relationships of rural communities and rural-based institutions during data collection (Newhouse, 1981). Newhouse added that schools are not mutually exclusive from the communities and are difficult to examine without including the whole community (1981). Parent and community involvement in education is another way schools and communities are linked.

The importance of the school-community link in the education of children has been established in the literature (Rush, 1992; Zigler & Muenchow, 1992). Rush identified community characteristics that contribute to high numbers of at-risk

students: lack of community support system, lack of link between school and community services, and lack of preventive mental health programs (1992). The often referred to quote, "It takes a village to raise a child" attests to the importance of the school-community link.

Methodology

The main purpose of the SDTP ethnographic study is to provide descriptive data necessary to explain the results of the quantitative analysis described in the overall NTP evaluation plan. The SDTP ethnographic study also serves to fill in research gaps not covered by the NTP Core Data Set; gaps include descriptions of the services provided by family service coordinators and the perceived effect of the services by SDTP participants. A focus on the FSC culture will provide a comprehensive picture of the over-all effect of the SDTP, since FSCs interact with all SDTP participants, community agencies, and schools. The success of school reform in rural communities and the characteristics of the communities are of particular interest. There is a paucity of research on the experiences and characteristics of rural communities involved in successful educational reform.

Newhouse suggested that researchers utilize observation as a research methodology when examining schools in rural communities (1981). Since schools and rural communities are closely intertwined, observation has the least amount of negative effect on the communities and schools (Newhouse, 1981). Knapp (1995)

suggested that research on comprehensive collaborative services for children and families should provide thick descriptions of the service arrangements at the point of service delivery and should demonstrate the impact at both the individual and organizational level. Service delivery of the study herein is through FSCs.

The holistic approach of ethnography is viewed as important in understanding the interactions of the people within social institutions and in the larger context of the communities (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Fetterman, 1989; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1992; LeCompte & Preissle, 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Spradley, 1979, 1980). Learning the behaviors and beliefs of community members and school personnel will provide a deeper description of the program-community-school relationship. An understanding of the unique cultural framework of each community as well as the FSC culture will aid in identifying SDTP program failures and successes. An identification of the strategies utilized by FSC during program implementation and community-school-family-agency coordination will add depth to the quantified data collection of the larger national study.

Research Questions

The developing theory and position of the SDTP ethnographic study as part of the larger NTP study guide research methods and data collection procedures. The ethnographic study as part of a federal research project has specific objectives. The SDTP ethnographic study addressed two of the seven objectives proposed

by the NTP Core Data Set. The two general research questions based on those objectives are as follows:

(1). What have been the barriers and difficulties encountered in implementing the SDTP?

(2). What are the characteristics of the SDTP which are associated with more successful implementation? What aspects of implementation are related to higher degrees of continuous successful transitions?

The SDTP ethnographic study also is guided by a number of objectives and questions that address the objectives. The questions limit the SDTP ethnographic study but also serve to guide the researcher in the choice of key informants. The questions are general enough to allow the researcher the flexibility required of an ethnographic study. The questions proposed for the local study include:

(1). What are the primary services provided by the family service coordinators to SDTP demonstration families and schools?

(2). What is the perceived effect of these services provided by family service coordinators to families and schools?

(3). What changes, if any, should be made in the services or the way they are provided to improve SDTP implementation?

Data Collection

Data collection methods remain flexible and respond to the developing theory. At present data are gathered in four ways: participant observations, formal and spontaneous interviews,

analysis of school and community documents, and analysis of family service coordinator journals.

Field notes. Sketchy notes are taken during convenient times in the field. Notes are never taken during home visits, because the observer feels it would be distracting and take away from the conversational quality of the visit. Some parents feel comfortable enough in the presence of the observer to discuss private information with the family service coordinators. It is doubtful that the parents would feel the same level of comfort if their conversations were being recorded.

Note taking is also not done during school visits for a number of reasons. The observer is very often an active participant in the classroom food activities that are presented by the family service coordinators. Note taking and preparing food at the same time are impossible. The observer attempted to take notes once during a classroom observation, but quickly stopped when the students because distracted. Students receive frequent classroom visitors, but obviously few who record anything during the visitations. A central goal of the observer is to be as unobtrusive in the classrooms as possible.

One of the times when note take is possible in the field is when the observer rides in the cars with family service coordinators. There is a considerable amount of travel time due to the sparse population of the sites. The privacy of the cars permits either in-depth interviewing of the family service coordinators or note taking of previous observations. The

presence of the family service coordinators allows the observer the opportunity to check accuracy of observations.

The field notes are expanded to include descriptions, observations, and personal reflections after the observer returns home. The field notes are then converted into word processing documents and later into ASCII files for transfer into the HyperResearch computer program (Researchware, Inc., 1994).

Participant observations. Participant observations are conducted by the researcher "shadowing" the family service coordinators through-out the coordinators' work days. Participant observations are conducted only in the demonstration schools and communities and not in the comparison schools and communities. The participant observations were conducted during the elementary school terms in 1993-1994 and 1994-1995 and will continue through the 1995-1996 and 1996-1997 school terms. The ethnographer spends on the average of two days per week in the field conducting both participant and non-participant observations. Participant observations are scheduled in advance and are rarely unannounced as recommended by the literature (Agar, 1986; Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; LeCompte & Preissle, 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Spradley, 1979, 1980). Unscheduled observations are limited to impromptu visits at the schools during the time spent "shadowing" the family service coordinators. Restricting observations to scheduled visits prevents the researcher from knowing a "typical day" in the life of a family service coordinator. It would be impossible to

observe the family service coordinators any other way, however, since FSCs typically visit from thirty to fifty families in their homes as well as community agencies and schools. The sparsely populated communities increase the necessity of accompanying rather than trying to find family service coordinators. The entire area covered by the ethnographer is about 6000 square miles, and it is not unusual for the ethnographer to travel 250 miles in one day. The time spent in the FSCs' cars traveling between homes, agencies, and institutions allows the researcher time to build rapport with the family service coordinators and provides the opportunity for spontaneous, private interviews.

Interviews. The formal interviews were conducted in the spring of 1993, 1994, and 1995, through the use of interview protocols developed at the SDTb site. Formal interviews will also be scheduled in the springtime of both 1996 and 1997. Spontaneous interviews occur during the participant observations and serve to clarify questions the ethnographer has about the school, community, or family service coordinator behaviors or beliefs.

Interviews, as mentioned earlier, are gathered in several ways: (1) structured interviews are entered during the interviews on interview protocols previously entered into a word processing program; (2) spontaneous interviews are hand written in the field then later entered into a word processing program; (3) some interviews of parents were gathered by tape recording and then entered into a word processing program. Interviews documents are

converted into ASCII files for transfer into HyperResearch computer program, as are the field observations (Researchware, Inc., 1994).

Analysis of FSC journals. The analysis of family service coordinator journals began in September of 1993 and is an ongoing part of the SDTP evaluation study. The journals provide personal reflections of the family service coordinators on the problems, solutions, and effective strategies utilized by the family service coordinators. Since time in the field is limited, the journals provide the ethnographer with important in-sider information about the communities and their members. Time in the field is limited for the ethnographer, because the ethnographer is a full-time graduate student. As a graduate research assistant, time in research is limited to twenty hour per week. Time is also limited in the sites because of the size of the area, number of sites involved, and number of FSCs.

Journal analyses contain considerably more steps than other data collection techniques. Steps involved in the analysis of FSC journals include: (1) the family service coordinators hand-write their journals; (2) the journals are transcribed into a word processing program; (3) the documents are converted into ASCII files for transfer into the HyperResearch computer program, as are the field observations and interviews (Researchware, Inc., 1994).

Document analyses. The observer also collects the materials family service coordinators distribute to parents during home

visits, materials the schools distribute to their families, and materials distributed by agencies. The document analyses are only cursory and not entered into the HyperResearch computer program (Researchware, Inc., 1994).

Validity. All interviews, participant observations, journal and document analyses, and data analysis are conducted and documented by a single individual. A triangulation of data collection procedures helps cross-check the accuracy of data, enhances the scope, density, and clarity of constructs developed during the course of the fieldwork, and corrects biases that occur when there is only one observer (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). The multi-disciplinary backgrounds of the co-authors enrich the ethnographer's interpretations of the data and serve to check the biases of the ethnographer. The ethnographer also utilizes a bias check during data collection which was suggested by the literature (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984; Spradley, 1979; Kirk & Miller, 1986). The bias check involves recording the ethnographer's feelings and assumptions in "observer comments." A journal has been utilized through the whole study which serves to document the ethnographer's thought processes during the data collection. The "observer comments' are part of the journal and help the ethnographer to know and understand the ethnographer's own perspectives, logic, and assumptions.

Data Sources

The communities are identified by the parameters designated by the NTP. The parameters defined six different SDTP demonstration school districts located in six different communities. Confidentiality of SDTP participants requires that communities and participants remain anonymous.

Interviews are systematically collected each spring on family service coordinators, and SDTP comparison and SDTP demonstration principals, teachers, and parents. The number of subjects has varied each year as the SDTP has moved through the school systems. Spontaneous interviews of participants occurred as the need arose. In total, about 300 interviews have been conducted. Participant observations are conducted with all family service coordinators. At the present time, there are nine family service coordinators. Journals of the family service coordinators are analyzed monthly.

Data Analysis

The researcher utilizes the Macintosh version of the computer program called HyperResearch for data management (Researchware, Inc., 1994). Data analysis is on going, but formal analysis occurs yearly after collection of the spring interviews. The observer/ethnographer analyzes the data by following the HyperResearch program's authors' suggestions of coding and categorizing and by following suggestions found in the literature (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Researchware, Inc., 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Data analysis begins with conversion of the word processing files into ASCII files. The steps used in data management through the HyperResearch (Researchware, Inc., 1994) program include:

1. Open the HyperResearch icon.

2. Create a new file through the pull-down menu.

3. Create the first case by renaming the Untitled Case at the Index Card window. Each case is assigned either a name or a number by the analyst and represents one word processing file in the research herein. An example of a file is a 1995 interview of teacher "01." The HyperResearch program allows the researcher any number of "cases." Cases may refer to participant interviews, field notes, or FSC journals. The analyst typically opens a study and includes all the cases for which data are collected for one data collection year. Data collection years for the study herein loosely follow the school calendar, September through June.

4. Choose "Open Source" from the Sources menu. Choose the source file of teacher "01" displayed in the dialog box. This action brings the ASCII file of teacher "01" that was created as an export file onto the screen.

5. Click on the first and last words of the passage the analyst wants to code. The text will become highlighted and the Code Assignment Dialog will appear. The analyst has three choices: creating a new code, assigning an existing code, or cancelling. Codes may contain up to thirty-two characters and be

comprised of letters, digits, and spaces. Any number of codes can be assigned to the same section. Code examples for teacher "01" could include "question 01," "positive opinion TP," and any additional codes that would identify the opinion of teacher "01" regarding the SDTP. Datum incidents are assigned a descriptive or directional code by the analyst as common themes are discovered. Datum incidents may be as small as one sentence or as large as several paragraphs. Strauss and Corbin have stated that a datum incident as small as a sentence can be important to the emerging theory (1990). The analyst develops codes to fit the data, rather that finding data that fit the codes.

6. Coding categories can be modified, new categories can be developed, and old ones can be discarded. Codes with common themes can be further grouped together to reduce the number of codes.

7. The relationship between the codes and the data can be analyzed by pulling the information together in a "report" form. The Analyze Codes Window allows the analyst to select codes, cases, and type of source for the report. The search and sort output can then be displayed onto the screen, saved on a disc, or printed.

8. The hypothesis menu allows the researcher to use codes that are based on assumptions of the data. The "If" "Then" expressions lead from basic assumptions about the data, through assumptions inferred from the basic assumptions to the final goal

of the hypothesis. HyperResearch displays an "If" window which represents the "assumption" part. The "Build Expression" button allows the analyst to define the underlying assumption of each point. The "Then" window represents the "Inference" portion of the HyperResearch "Rule."

9. The file must be saved in order to be retrieved later.

HyperResearch is utilized because it allows data reduction thorough coding procedures and facilitates theory development through the use of bolean statements (Researchware, Inc., 1994). Qualitative research as an inductive research procedure produces volumes of data. The use of a computer program facilitates organization of the data into manageable pieces of information. Coding procedures are very time consuming but are worth the effort, because they are useful in final report writing. Retrieval of coded statements is easily accomplished and facilitates theory building for use in the final reports.

Results

The longitudinal data are still being collected, therefore results must be considered tentative. Community descriptions will be much more general than one usually finds in ethnographic literature because of the confidentiality levels of the larger federal research project (Agar, 1986; Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; LeCompte & Preissle, 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Spradley, 1979, 1980). A description of the duties of FSCs will aid in understanding their role in the transformation of schools. In general, all SDTP demonstration schools have changed to some

extent. The SDTP demonstration schools have increased the use of developmentally appropriate practices in varying degrees, parents are increasingly involved in the schools and in the educational experiences of their children, and some schools have changed their pedagogy philosophy from simply the cognitive domain to the "whole child." The results section will provide data to answer the SDTP research questions regarding the schools. The SDTP demonstration schools utilize FSCs differently, differ in classroom instruction philosophies and methodologies, and differ in degree of curriculum changes.

Services Provided to Schools

Comprehensive Head Start-like services have been implemented by the FSCs in all the SDTP demonstration schools. A report by Allen (1995b) identified the following services:

1. Milk is offered to the children on a daily basis.

2. Food activities are prepared for each SDTP classroom on a regular basis as decided by the teachers.

3. Transition plans for each child are prepared at the end of the school year by the teachers.

4. Training in DAPs are offered to teachers and principals each summer.

5. FSCs serve as liaisons between homes and schools and when asked assist teachers with special projects.

6. FSCs encourage parent involvement in the schools and in the education of their children.

A 1994 SDFP report by Allen summarized the services demonstration schools received from the SDFP and FSCs. Interviews of six principals listed the following services:

> (1) brought in a couple of watermelons the other day, purchased celery and carrots, prepared and conducted food activities, provided communication with the parents on behalf of the teachers and myself, let parents know when parenting classes were and helped to find baby sitters for parents to encourage parents to come to the PTA and parent meetings; (2) conducted parent meetings and provided communication between school and home; (3) given programs on specific topics concerning parents; (4) helped parents with needs and they been involved in instruction in the classroom for the teachers; (5) anything they [teachers] needed the FSCs have provided; (6) given them [teachers] information on what they could do in the classroom such as food activities, health information, and good eating habits.

Principals interviewed in 1993 and 1995 made remarks about FSC services that were similar to their remarks of 1994. Teachers interviewed in 1993, 1994, and 1995, listed more specific FSC services than the principals. Interviews of eight teachers in 1994 (Allen, 1994) included the following statements:

> (1) The biggest help is in the home. She [FSC] can go right away if I have a concern or if not to the home she can contact them at work. (2) She [FSC] has helped in the room, gone to the homes for me, brought things to the home, taken

things back, and brought kids to school. She's a great connection. (3) FSCs provided nutritionall things, brought kids to school if they missed the bus, and is a contact person if I need the parent. It is nice to know that if you need someone from home you have someone you can count on to help. (4) She [FSC] has reported back to me about a certain parent and the home situation. One student wasn't coming to school on time. She went to the home and found out that the parent was single parent, her car wouldn't start, and she had trouble getting the child to school. I was a little more understanding of the situation after that. (5) She [FSC] provides communication. She has come to me with parent concerns - like one didn't understand inventive spelling, so I addressed that in the next newsletter. (6) [FSC] She has made all the contacts for the big brother of my student. That is helpful because I don't have to track people down. (7) She [FSC] has been a personal confidant. I can tell her things or concerns about a family. If I don't have any proof on things I can talk to her about it. She's kind of a sounding board, plus I value her opinion. (8) They [FSCs] actually do anything we ask if they have the time.

In all three data collection years, one of the most valuable aspects of the FSC role to SDTP demonstration principals and teachers was that of a liaison between school and home. FSCs provide the communication link that is often lacking between families and schools. According to a principal interviewed in

1994, "Sometimes the parents are more receptive at taking the advice from the FSCs rather than from me. They are in the home."

Family service coordinators have also been instrumental in developing adult literacy programs and assisting parents with completion of G.E.D. and baccalaureate programs. Parents that have become more involved with the schools have become less apprehensive about the school settings and seem more likely to pursue further education.

Strategies Used in Implementing SDTP Services

The FSCs had utilized a variety of strategies to implement SDTP services. The FSCs have developed unique approaches which are consistent with their community and school norms and values. Strategies utilized by some of the FSCs in some of the schools include the following list:

1. FSCs have helped to provide or personally provide transportation for parents to attend conferences, meetings, parent classes and school activities.

2. FSCs either provide free babysitting or arrange babysitting for parents so that parents can attend conferences, meetings, parent classes, and school activities.

3. FSCs schedule SDTP meetings either before or after parent-teacher meetings to encourage attendance at the parent-teacher meetings.

4. FSCs include children in SDTP meetings to encourage parent attendance.

5. FSCs schedule SDTP meetings after lunch at the schools

to encourage parents to visit schools and eat lunch with their children.

6. FSCs schedule home visits at the schools to encourage parents to visit the schools.

7. FSCs encourage and assist teachers in creating and using centers and workshops.

8. FSCs often began SDTP implementation at the level of the principals, recognizing the fact that the teachers are more apt to accept suggestions for changing their classrooms from the principals rather than from "outsiders."

Barriers to Project Implementation

Some family service coordinators have encountered barriers in SDTP implementation in some of the communities. The barriers and challenges include the following:

1. resistance of some of the teachers or schools to change,
2. full acceptance of DAP by all the teachers,
3. communication problems,
4. great distances that must be traveled due to the sparse population of the school districts,
5. hazardous road conditions due to a variety of adverse weather conditions,
6. resistance of some families to government help, and
7. difficulty in contacting some families (some families do not have phones and seem to evade the FSCs).

Effect of the Services on Schools

The SDTP demonstration classrooms have experienced changes in varying degrees. Of particular importance is the improved communication between school and home, increased parent involvement in their children's education both in and out of school, and increased use of DAPs in the classrooms.

Parent involvement. Teachers and principals in SDTP demonstration schools have noted a number of positive effects of the SDTP and FSC services. Parent involvement has increased in most of the SDTP demonstration schools. One principal reported during an interview in 1995 (Allen, 1995a):

> With the combination of Transition Project and a school-wide effort, involvement has increased both inside and outside the school. ...teachers invite the parents in and the school invites them to come anytime. The most successful thing was to invite the parents in for lunch. ...parents came by the basketfuls. At the beginning of the year I always send a note home asking parents where they want to volunteer and teachers use that list throughout the year.

Involvement has not only increased in most of the SDTP demonstration schools, but it has also been defined differently by the schools. Parents are utilized by two demonstration schools as "teacher volunteers," which represents a change from the way they were utilized before the SDTP was implemented. An interview of a parent in 1995 demonstrates how she feels about

her involvement in the classroom and how her relationship with the teachers has changed:

> Gotten to know the teacher better too... You are in the room helping them and then they've asked me to help with other things. You develop a better relationship with them. Talk to them more outside the school too. It's probably more child related, but it is better than it has been before. Then [before Transition Project implementation] you were just another parent... They never had a volunteer program here until two years ago. They didn't even like parents coming into the school. I have always volunteered, but think I volunteer more because I am in the classroom now. Before that they just had you cut paper. Now you get to do better things...

Further evidence of the utilization of parents in the classroom was observed by the ethnographer. The following is an excerpt from the ethnographer's field notes that were written after a participant observation in one of the SDTP demonstration schools:

> ...Two parents had been asked by the teacher to each take a center, plus the teacher had one, and FSC and I had one... The parents were instructed during recess what to do at the centers. Before we started, the teacher asked each child to introduce their "friend." The children stood beside their moms, with their hands on their mother's shoulders, and one at a time introduced them... The children were beaming and

> obviously very proud to have their mothers present... The teacher was warm and friendly... She was obviously pleased to have guests... she made us feel special and comfortable... The centers were make-shift, rickety old card tables. The mothers skillfully kept the centers from collapsing...

Improved home/school communication. Improved communication between the home and school has changed the way some SDTP demonstration schools handle their students. A principal interviewed in 1995 stated, "We have come to view the whole child. Viewing the whole child instead of simply the child's cognitive domain allows us to make better decisions regarding the child." One of the teachers interviewed in 1994 gave a similar remark, "I feel like I know the kids better."

A teacher interviewed in 1994 suggested that because of the improved communication between school and home her relationship with parents has improved (Allen, 1994). The teacher stated:

> I feel that I have a better relationship with the families than ever. I have only visited the families before the kids start school but then don't see them until conferences. This way they [parents] are visited monthly, and the parents are more aware of how the children are doing in school. They [parents] seem to speak to me more readily or else they ask the FSC and she asks me. The communication is definitely more open.

Increased use of DAP. Demonstration schools and classrooms in the schools vary in degree of change, according to Allen (1995a, 1995b). Some of the classrooms were utilizing DAPs before the SDTP was implemented and some classrooms were using traditional teacher-centered methodologies. All classrooms have increased the usage of DAPs to some degree. The FSCs were asked in their spring interviews how much change had occurred in the classrooms. Family Service Coordinator responses in 1995 varied from, "Definitely more DAP being done in these classrooms either because of the High Scope training or our interventions in the room," to "First grade is doing more hands-on learning... stuck behind the door because curriculum has to be approved by the principal and conform to the guidelines... Second grade has not changed much." The response of one of the FSCs interviewed in 1995 reflects the effect of time on school reform. The FSC stated, "...been tremendous... I have been working on DAP since kindergarten-you have to move slowly with teachers-and finally this year DAP are being implemented using centers and workshops. Teachers have benefitted by High Scope and are looking forward to attending it again next year. Teachers have also gotten more accustomed to working with me and are more receptive."

The ethnographer has observed physical changes in many of the SDTP demonstration classrooms. Classrooms seating has changed from rows to desk groupings, and there is more of the students' own work lining the classroom walls. A classroom observation at one of the demonstration schools in the fall of

1995 surprised the ethnographer. The ethnographer wrote in her field notes:

> In the second grade room I noticed that there were no desks! Quite a change! Later I asked the FSCs and they said the teachers had originally discussed/argued about who was going to get new desks in April/May. After attending High Scope in August the teachers got fired up and told the school to find tables for them instead! So the teachers in the first and second grade rooms have no desks in their rooms! The children work five per group at each table. The group dynamics were interesting to watch...

An interesting aspect of the classroom change is that change occurs even after the teachers are no longer in the SDTP. Kindergarten through third grade teachers can attend High Scope whether one of the two cohorts is in their classroom or not; thus some teachers attend after the children have passed into the next grade. A kindergarten teacher stated in an interview in the fall of 1995 that she had not attended High Scope until the previous summer. Since then, she has gotten "fired up" about DAP and reorganized her whole room. The teacher said she had always utilized DAP to some extent but has begun using DAPs with greater consistency.

Discussion

Data analysis is ongoing and conclusions are based on tentative results and interpretations by the SDTP ethnographer. Throughout the data the characteristics of communities, schools,

and teachers as well as community and schools norms, level of parent involvement, and school-community relationship reappear. Wells et al. (1995) noted similar community characteristics. The identification of community, school, and teacher characteristics is an important element in understanding school transformation. Success of the SDTP depends to a large extent of the abilities of the FSCs to identify and design the SDTP to fit within community and school norms and values.

Parent Involvement

The family service coordinators have assisted the schools in improving the level of parent involvement in all the SDTP demonstration schools. The communities with the highest levels of solidarity and trust, as identified by Greider et al., were the most involved with their school and experienced the most successful school transformations (1991). Because of the family service coordinators assistance in improving the school-community relationship, SDTP schools have begun to include parents more frequently in their daily schedules. Schools with the highest sense of community have included parents to the largest extent.

Many parents in all the communities work outside the home, however the parents in two of the communities have arranged their work schedules in order to become more involved in the school. The parents volunteer in the classroom, attend parent education meetings, and eat lunch with their children at school. While it is too early to tell if the children will all graduate, it is not too early to observe how much they enjoy school. The parents,

teachers, and ethnographer attest to how excited the children are about school. According to the literature, the parents' involvement has a great deal to do with the children's excitement with education and with educational achievement (Grolnick & Ryan, 1989; Purkey & Smith, 1985; Vacha & McLaughlin, 1992).

School-Community Relationship

Increased communication between home, school, and community agencies has greatly facilitated SDTP implementation, assisted families in meeting needs, improved the manner in which schools view children, and improved the relationships between families and schools. The improved community-school link should greatly improve the life chances of children (Chafel, 1990; Gleason, 1993; Rush, 1992; Zigler & Muenchow, 1992).

The demonstration schools with the most successful SDTP implementation are the schools that experience the closest community-school relationship. Schools are well established institutions and, as stated earlier, rural schools and rural communities are tightly linked and interdependent (Carlson & Dunne, 1981; Cousins, 1984; Hobbs, 1981; Versteeg, 1993; Wells et al., 1995). If rural schools fully support implementation of the Project, then the parents and rest of the community will support the reform efforts. For example, a FSC stated during an interview, "Being associated with the school is the only thing that gets my foot in the door with some families."

In like manner, school reform efforts need the support of the whole community to be successful (Mirel, 1994; Tyack & Tobin,

1994; Wells et al., 1995). Communities that support the SDTP are more involved with the SDTP at all levels of implementation and have considerably enhanced and ensured the success of the SDTP.

Developmental Appropriate Practices

As stated earlier, the schools and classrooms have increased the usage of DAPs to some extent. The SDTP demonstration teachers seem to be utilizing DAPs to a greater degree every year (Allen, 1994, 1995a, 1995b). The literature on school reform suggests that schools change slowly and that it takes time for school transformations to occur (Mirel, 1995; Tyack & Tobin, 1994; Wells et al., 1995).

Significance of Study

Before schools can be transformed into human-scale learning opportunities for adults, schools must first improve educational opportunities for children. The SDTP represents one such effort. The present study addressed the comprehensive early-education intervention efforts of the SDTP. The SDTP is an attempt to improve the life chances for children through improving their home and school environments.

An ethnographic study is a unique approach to educational evaluation but can be quite useful in its description of changes in the classroom and the effect of those changes on the community (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). While the approach may be unique, ethnography's holistic view (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) is compatible with Head Start's holistic approach to families.

Learning how families interact with schools and how families perceive their schools is fundamentally important to policy makers as well as practitioners. Comprehensive changes in American education can not be successfully accomplished unless the relationship between the schools, communities, and families is fully understood. The present study will serve to enlighten policy makers by providing insights into the school-family-community relationship, and the documentation and description of changes within SDTP classrooms will serve practitioners.

The present study will also contribute to the literature on schools, families, and communities. The effects of the services provided by family service coordinators to families and schools will be of particular interest. The generalization of research results, often not the goal of ethnography (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1992; Spradley, 1979, 1980), has been enhanced in this study through random selection of demonstration schools, utilization of comparison schools, utilization of multi-sites, and triangulation of research data (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Suggestions for Future Research

Researchers should investigate further the relationship between parent involvement levels, community norms, and school transformations. The impact of the community on school transformations is an important and but often neglected element of educational research.

Ethnographic research provides an excellent mechanism for understanding the effect of school reform on schools and communities. The close relationship of communities and schools can best be understood in their natural environment. Future educational researchers should consider utilizing the "natural" approach of ethnography.

The use of a computer program to manage the qualitative data has been a useful experience. The ethnographer gained considerable insight into the use of computers and computer programs throughout the study and recommends both to qualitative researchers.

The paper herein represents the combined efforts of two researchers and a practitioner. The multi-disciplinary approach of the authors facilitates theory building and the application of theory to practice. The early childhood background of the practitioner, curriculum and instruction background of the professor, and sociological background of the ethnographer represent a unique approach to educational research. Future educational researchers should consider utilizing similar combined efforts.

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